

# Program Announcement

Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs

Neurofibromatosis Research Program

Postdoctoral Traineeship Award

Funding Opportunity Number: W81XWH-09-NFRP-POSTDOC

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## I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### A. Program Objectives

The Neurofibromatosis Research Program (NFRP) was established in fiscal year 1996 (FY96) to promote the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of neurofibromatosis (NF). Appropriations for the NFRP from FY96 through FY08 totaled \$190.3 million (M). The FY09 appropriation is \$10M.

**FY09 NFRP Vision:** The vision of the FY09 NFRP is to find and fund the best research to decrease the clinical impact of NF. Toward this goal, the NFRP seeks to:

- Support innovative, high-impact research that will foster new directions for and address neglected issues in NF research,
- Sponsor multidisciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations that will bring new perspectives to the field,
- Foster the next generation of NF investigators,
- Promote translational and clinical studies to move promising ideas from bench to bedside,
- Develop a balanced portfolio of meritorious research related to all aspects of NF1, NF2, and Schwannomatosis.

**NFRP Research Resources Initiative:** Resources developed through NFRP funding that are available to the scientific community can be found at <http://cdmrp.army.mil/nfrp/nfrpresources>. Investigators are urged to leverage and contribute to these resources. For more guidance on data sharing, refer to Application Instructions and General Information, Appendix 5.

### B. Award Description

The NFRP Postdoctoral Traineeship Award mechanism is new for FY09. The Postdoctoral Traineeship Award will enable recent medical or other doctoral degree graduates to obtain the necessary experience to pursue an independent career in neurofibromatosis research. ***Candidates for this award should exhibit a strong desire to pursue a career in neurofibromatosis research.***

Under this award mechanism, the postdoctoral trainee is considered the Principal Investigator (PI) and, as such, should write the project narrative with appropriate direction from the mentor. The focus of these awards is on the PI, the mentor, and the training program and environment. These awards primarily provide salary support for the PI and require the active involvement of a designated mentor who is an established NF researcher, as evidenced by a demonstrated record of funding and publications. While the PI is not required to have previous experience in NF research, this proposal must focus on NF research.

**Areas of Encouragement (*Revised for FY09*):** The FY09 NFRP encourages research proposals that specifically address the critical needs of the NF community in the following areas:

- Complications of NF with high mortality such as neoplasms and cerebrovascular abnormalities;
- Complications of NF with high morbidity such as skeletal maladies, learning deficits, hormone-associated effects, and pain;
- Refinement and standardization of imaging techniques, molecular and cellular markers, and quality of life metrics for use in future clinical trials; and
- Translational research such as the development or preclinical testing of therapeutic agents for the treatment of NF.

### **C. Eligibility**

#### **Postdoctoral Ph.D. PIs**

- Must have successfully defended a doctoral thesis by September 1, 2009;
- Must have not been in the research setting in which the proposed research will be conducted for more than 2 years; and
- Must have 4 or less years of postdoctoral research experience.

#### **Postdoctoral M.D. PIs**

- Must have an M.D. degree;
- Must be able to devote at least 40% level of effort for the performance period of the traineeship; *and*
- By August 1, 2009:
  - Must be enrolled in an accredited intern training program; *or*
  - Must be enrolled in an accredited residency or fellowship training program with at least 2 years of training remaining; *or*
  - If not enrolled in an accredited intern, residency, or fellowship training program, must be within 3 years of the last formal training.

Additional information about individual and institutional eligibility may be found in the Application Instructions and General Information, Appendix 1.

### **D. Funding**

- The maximum period of performance is 2 years.
- The maximum allowable funding for the entire period of performance is **\$100,000** in direct costs.
- The applicant may request the entire maximum direct cost amount for a project that may be less than the maximum 2-year period of performance.

- Regardless of the period of performance proposed, the applicant may not exceed the maximum direct cost. In addition to the direct costs, indirect costs may be proposed in accordance with your institution's negotiated rate agreement.

Within the guidelines provided in the Application Instructions and General Information, funds can cover:

- Salary/stipend
- Health insurance
- Training
- Tuition
- Seminars, Courses, and Workshops
- Travel between collaborating institutions
- Travel to scientific/technical meetings for the PI only

Funds may not be used for supplies, equipment, or research with animals, human subjects, or human biological substances. The mentor must have current funding to support the research of the postdoc.

Any funding (direct costs) in excess of the allowable stipend must be used as direct support for the PI.

Training awards usually have a different institutional indirect charge than research awards. Postdoctoral Award applicants are encouraged to check with their institution concerning indirect costs.

***The Office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) expects to allot approximately \$0.36M of the \$10M FY09 NFRP appropriation to fund approximately 3 Postdoctoral Traineeship Award applications, depending upon the quality and number received. Funding of applications received in response to this Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity is contingent on the availability of Federal funds for this program.***

## **E. Award Administration**

No change in PI will be allowed once the proposal has been submitted. A change in mentor will not be allowed for this award except under extenuating circumstances that will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the US Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity (USAMRAA) Grants Officer, provided that the intent of the award mechanism is met. Changes in institution will be allowed only at the discretion of the USAMRAA Grants Officer.

Refer to the Application Instructions and General Information, Appendix 5, for general award administration information.

## II. TIMELINE FOR SUBMISSION AND REVIEW

Proposal submission is a two-step process consisting of (1) pre-application submission and (2) application submission.

<b>Pre-application Submission Deadline:</b>	<b>March 24, 2009</b>
<b>Application Submission Deadline:</b>	<b>April 14, 2009</b>
<b>Scientific Peer Review:</b>	<b>Summer, 2009</b>
<b>Programmatic Review:</b>	<b>Late Summer/Early Fall, 2009</b>

Awards will be made approximately 4 to 6 months after receiving a funding notification letter, but no later than September 30, 2010.

## III. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Proposal submission is a two-step process consisting of (1) a pre-application submission through the [CDMRP eReceipt system \(https://cdmrp.org/\)](https://cdmrp.org/), and (2) an application submission through [Grants.gov \(http://www.grants.gov/\)](http://www.grants.gov/).

PIs and organizations identified in the application submitted through Grants.gov should be the same as those identified in the pre-application. If there is a change in PI or organization after submission of the pre-application, the PI must contact the eReceipt help desk at [help@cdmrp.org](mailto:help@cdmrp.org) or 301-682-5507.

The Government reserves the right to reject duplicative applications submitted to different award mechanisms within the same program or to other CDMRP programs.

### A. Step 1 – Pre-Application Components and Submission

***Pre-application submission is the required first step.*** The pre-application consists of the components discussed below. All pre-application components must be submitted electronically through the [CDMRP eReceipt system](https://cdmrp.org/) by **5:00 p.m. Eastern time (ET) on the deadline date**. Refer to the Application Instructions and General Information for detailed information.

- Proposal Information
- Proposal Contacts
- Collaborators and Conflicts of Interest (COI)
- Letter of Intent (LOI) Narrative

### B. Step 2 – Application Components and Submission

***Application submissions will not be accepted unless the pre-application process is completed by the pre-application deadline.*** Applications must be submitted electronically by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) through Grants.gov ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)).

Each application submission must include the completed application package of forms and attachments identified in [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) for the USAMRAA Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity. In addition to the specific instructions below, please refer to the Application Instructions and General Information for detailed requirements of each component.

The package includes:

**1. SF-424 (R&R) Application for Federal Assistance Form**

**2. Attachments Form**

- Attachment 1: Project Narrative (6-page limit)

While showing evidence of appropriate direction from the mentor, Postdoctoral Traineeship Award applications must be written by the trainee as PI and author. Describe the proposed project using the outline below. *Preliminary data are not required but may be included.*

- **PI's Career Goals:** Describe the PI's career goals and how the proposed training will promote the PI's career development in neurofibromatosis research or patient care. Discuss the PI's career/research plans after the completion of this award.
- **Training Program:** Describe the training plan, including a timeline, coursework, laboratory techniques, conferences, seminars, journal clubs, teaching responsibilities, and/or clinical responsibilities. Explain how the training plan will advance the PI's development as a neurofibromatosis researcher. Describe the mentor's background and experience in neurofibromatosis research, and how the mentor will assist the PI in developing his/her career. Describe how the training plan is supported by the environment, including a description of ongoing neurofibromatosis research at the institution. Include information on training or collaborations with other investigators.
- **Research Project:** Describe the proposed project using the outline below:
  - **Background:** Present the ideas and reasoning behind the proposed work. Cite relevant literature. Describe previous experience most pertinent to this proposal.
  - **Hypothesis or Objective:** State the hypothesis to be tested or the objective to be reached.
  - **Specific Aims:** Concisely explain the project's specific aims.
  - **Research Strategy:** Describe the experimental design, methods, and analyses, including appropriate controls, in sufficient detail for analysis. Address potential problem areas and present alternative methods and approaches.
- Attachment 2: Supporting Documentation
  - References Cited
  - Acronyms and Symbol Definitions

- Facilities & Other Resources
- Description of Existing Equipment
- Publications and/or Patent Abstracts (five-document limit)
- Letters of Institutional Support (two-page limit per letter)
- Letters of Collaboration (if applicable, two-page limit per letter)
- Transcripts
- Attachment 3: Technical Abstract (one-page limit)
- Attachment 4: Public Abstract (one-page limit)
- Attachment 5: Statement of Work (SOW, three-page limit)
- Attachment 6: Detailed Budget and Justification
- Attachment 7: Impact Statement (one-page limit)

State how the training program and the proposed work will have an impact on fostering the PI's expertise and future independent career in neurofibromatosis research.

- Attachment 8: Statement of Eligibility (required)

Use the Statement of Eligibility template, located in the Application Instructions and General Information, Appendix 9, signed by the Department Chair, Dean, or equivalent official verifying the eligibility requirements described in Section I.C. of the Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity are met.

- Attachment 9: Federal Agency Financial Plan (if applicable)
- Attachment 10-15: Subaward Detailed Budget and Justification (if applicable)

### **3. Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded Form)**

- PI Biographical Sketch (four-page limit)
- PI Current/Pending Support
- Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (four-page limit each)
  - A biosketch of the PI's mentor is required.
- Key Personnel Current/Pending Support
  - Current/Pending Support for the PI's mentor is required.

### **4. Research & Related Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form**

**5. Confidential Letters of Recommendation (two-page limit per letter):** In addition to the completed Grants.gov application package of forms and attachments, Postdoctoral Traineeship Award applications also require the submission of **three** confidential letters of recommendation by the individuals (including the primary mentor) designated during the pre-application process. The PI should monitor whether the letters have been received;

however, the PI is not permitted or able to view these letters. If confidential letters of recommendation cannot be submitted by the individuals named in the pre-application, the PI should contact the CDMRP eReceipt help desk at [help@cdmrp.org](mailto:help@cdmrp.org) or 301-682-5507.

***Confidential letter of recommendation from the mentor.*** One of the 3 letters should come from the PI's primary mentor, describing his/her commitment to the PI's training, career development, and mentorship. The mentor's letter of recommendation should describe:

- The PI's potential to become a successful and productive neurofibromatosis researcher;
- The mentor's commitment to the training, career development, and mentorship of the PI, including details of the mentor's proposed interactions with the PI during the PI's training;
- The mentor's record of training other postdoctoral fellows and evidence of current funding;
- The relevance of the proposed research project to training the PI in neurofibromatosis;
- The PI's proposed research training program, including descriptions of the training environment, experience with laboratory techniques, conferences, and journal clubs, and how it will facilitate the PI's career development as a successful neurofibromatosis researcher;
- The resources available to adequately support the PI's project (specific details on existing support should be covered in the Current/Pending support section); and
- The degree to which the PI participated in idea development and proposal preparation, and the degree to which the PI will participate in the execution of the proposal if funded.

***Two additional confidential letters of recommendation.*** The remaining two letters should describe the PI's unique qualifications and accomplishments that highlight his/her potential for success in pursuing a career in neurofibromatosis research. Specifically, each letter should offer the writer's perspective on:

- The PI's qualifications, characteristics, and achievements;
- The PI's potential for productivity and desire for establishing a successful career in neurofibromatosis research;
- The relevance of the proposed research project to training the PI in neurofibromatosis; and
- The suitability of the mentor and training environment for providing the PI with a solid foundation in neurofibromatosis research.

Refer to the Application Instructions and General Information, Section II.B., for additional information regarding submission of the letters of recommendation.

## **IV. INFORMATION FOR APPLICATION REVIEW**

### **A. Application Review and Selection Overview**

All applications are evaluated by scientists, clinicians, and consumer advocates using a two-tier review process. The first tier is a scientific peer review of applications against established criteria for determining scientific merit. The second tier is a programmatic review that compares submissions to each other and recommends proposals for funding based on scientific merit, overall goals of the program and the specific intent of the award mechanism. Additional information about the two-tier review process used by the CDMRP may be found at <http://cdmrp.army.mil/fundingprocess>

The peer review and programmatic review processes are conducted confidentially to maintain the integrity of the merit-based selection process. Each tier of review requires panelists to sign a non-disclosure statement attesting that application and evaluation information will not be disclosed outside the panel. Violations of the non-disclosure statement can result in the dissolving of a panel(s) and other corrective actions. Institutional personnel and PIs are prohibited from contacting persons involved in the application review process to gain protected evaluation information or to influence the evaluation process. Violations of these prohibitions will result in the administrative withdrawal of the institution's application. Violations by panelists or PIs that compromise the confidentiality of the peer review and programmatic review processes may also result in suspension or debarment of their employing institutions from Federal awards. Furthermore, it is a crime for Federal officials to disclose confidential information of one party to another third party (Title 18 United States Code 1905).

The Government reserves the right to review all applications based on one or more of the required attachments or supporting documentation (e.g., Impact Statement).

### **B. Review Criteria**

**1. Peer Review:** All proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria, which are listed in decreasing order of importance.

- **Principal Investigator**
  - How the PI's achievements (as reflected by academic performance, awards, honors, and previous funding) indicate a potential for a successful career in neurofibromatosis research.
  - How the PI's stated career goals demonstrate a strong personal commitment to pursuing a career as a neurofibromatosis researcher or clinician.
  - How the letters of recommendation support the PI's high potential for success and dedication to a career in neurofibromatosis research.
  - Whether the PI meets the appropriate eligibility requirements as verified by the

Statement of Eligibility.

- **Mentor**
  - How the mentor's background, qualifications, research program, committed resources, and available time support his/her ability to supervise the PI's training and research project.
  - How the mentor's training achievements, as reflected by his/her previous trainees' career achievements and areas of interest, indicate the potential for successful training of the PI in neurofibromatosis research.
  - Whether the mentor's letter of recommendation indicates a high level of commitment to training the PI.
  - Whether the quality of the proposal suggests that the mentor provided appropriate guidance in its preparation.
- **Training Program and Environment**
  - How the individualized training program will augment the PI's expertise.
  - How well the training will prepare the PI for an independent career in neurofibromatosis research or patient care.
  - How the scientific environment is appropriate for the proposed training and research.
  - How the training and research requirements are adequately supported by the availability of and accessibility to facilities and resources (including collaborative arrangements).
- **Impact**
  - How the training program and research project will have an impact on the PI's expertise in neurofibromatosis research or patient care.
- **Research Strategy and Feasibility**
  - How the research project is appropriate for the training program and the level of training for the PI.
  - How well the research project addresses an issue related to neurofibromatosis.
  - Whether the research requirements are supported adequately by the scientific environment, necessary resources, and any collaborative arrangements proposed.
  - How well the hypothesis or objectives, aims, experimental design, methods, and analyses are developed.
  - How well the PI acknowledges potential problems and addresses alternative approaches.

The following criteria will not be individually scored, but may impact the overall evaluation of the application:

- **Budget**
  - Whether the budget is appropriate for the proposed research and within the limitations of the award mechanism.
- **Application Presentation**
  - How the writing and components of the application influenced the review.

**2. Programmatic Review:** The following criteria are used by programmatic reviewers to make funding recommendations that maintain the program's broad portfolio:

- Ratings and evaluations of the peer reviewers,
- Program portfolio balance,
- Programmatic relevance,
- Relative impact, and
- Adherence to the intent of the award mechanism.

Scientifically sound proposals that best fulfill the above criteria and most effectively address the unique focus and goals of the program will be identified by Integration Panel (IP) members and recommended for funding to the Commanding General, US Army Medical Research and Materiel Command. The highest scoring applications from the first tier of review are not automatically recommended for funding. All applications are carefully considered to ensure that the funds available are allocated to those proposals that best fulfill the goals, objectives, and areas of encouragement of the program.

Investigators are urged to view previously NFRP-funded proposals at <http://cdmrp.army.mil/search.aspx?program=NFRP> to aid in the development of applications that represent novel areas of research, as portfolio balance is an important consideration at programmatic review to ensure that gaps in the research are adequately addressed.

## V. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

After receipt of applications from Grants.gov, the following administrative actions may occur.

### A. Rejection

The following will result in administrative rejection of the application:

- Project Narrative exceeds page limit.
- Project Narrative is missing.
- Budget is missing.
- Page size is larger than 8.5 inches x 11.0 inches (approximately 21.59 cm x 27.94 cm).

## **B. Modifications**

- Pages exceeding the specified limits will be removed for all documents other than the Project Narrative.
- Documents not requested will be removed.
- ***NEW for FY09:*** Following the application deadline, you may be contacted by email from CDMRP with a request to provide certain missing supporting documents (excluding those listed directly above in Section A, Rejection). The missing documents must be provided within 48 hours of the date and time the email was sent. Otherwise, the application will be peer reviewed without the missing documents.

## **C. Withdrawal**

The following may result in administrative withdrawal of the application:

- FY09 IP member(s) is found to be involved in the pre-application or application processes including, but not limited to, concept design, application development, budget preparation, and the development of any supporting document. A list of the FY09 IP members may be found at <http://cdmrp.army.mil/research>
- Submission of the same research project to different award mechanisms within the same program or to other CDMRP programs.
- The application does not conform to this Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity description to an extent that precludes appropriate scientific peer and programmatic review.
- Direct costs as shown on the detailed budget form exceed the maximum allowed by the award mechanism.
- Inclusion of URLs, with the exception of links to published references.

## **D. Withhold**

Applications that appear to involve research misconduct will be administratively withheld from further consideration pending institutional investigation. The institution will be requested to provide the findings of the investigation to the USAMRAA Contracting/Grants Officer for a determination of the final disposition of the application.

## VI. CONTACT INFORMATION

**A. Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity, application format, or required documentation:** To view all funding opportunities offered by the CDMRP, perform a Grants.gov basic search using the CFDA Number 12.420. Submit questions as early as possible. Response times will vary depending upon the volume of inquiries. Every effort will be made to answer questions within 5 working days.

Phone: 301-619-7079  
Fax: 301-619-7792  
Email: [cdmrp.pa@amedd.army.mil](mailto:cdmrp.pa@amedd.army.mil)

**B. eReceipt system:** Questions related to pre-application components through the CDMRP eReceipt system should be directed to the eReceipt help desk, which is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET.

Phone: 301-682-5507  
Website: <https://cdmrp.org>  
Email: [help@cdmrp.org](mailto:help@cdmrp.org)

**C. Grants.gov contacts:** Questions related to application submission through the [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) ([http://www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov)) portal should be directed to the Grants.gov help desk, which is available Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET. Deadlines for application submission are 11:59 p.m. ET on the deadline date. Please note that the CDMRP help desk is unable to answer questions about Grants.gov submissions.

Phone: 800-518-4726  
Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

***Grants.gov will notify PIs of changes made to this Program Announcement/Funding Opportunity and/or application package ONLY if the PI subscribes to the mailing list by clicking on the “send me change notification emails” link on the Opportunity Synopsis page for this announcement. If the PI does not subscribe and the application package is updated or changed, the original version of the application package may not be accepted.***